



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE SORROWS
OF THE CROSS.

E. H. HANSELL



RIVINGTONS.

THE SORROWS OF THE CROSS

THE SORROWS
OF
THE CROSS.

BY
E. H. HANSELL, B.D.

RECTOR OF EAST ILSLEY, BERKS



RIVINGTONS
WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON
Oxford and Cambridge

MDCCCLXXXI

100 . c c . 166 .



"POST TENEBRAS LVX."

LIBERIS, QUOS DONAVIT MIHI DEUS,
PARVULAE ANTE MATREM IN REQUIEM INGRESSAE,
QUINQUE ADHUC SUPERSTITIBUS,
IN MEMORIAM PARENTIS AMANTISSIMAE DILECTISSIMAE.

Fest. Omnium Sanctorum,
MDCCCLXXX.

CONTENTS.

| SERMON | PAGE |
|------------------------------|------|
| I. BODILY PAIN | I |
| II. RIDICULE | 8 |
| III. INGRATITUDE | 17 |
| IV. DISAPPOINTMENT | 27 |
| V. SYMPATHY | 35 |
| VI. SARACHTHANI | 44 |
| VII. THE SIN OF THE WORLD .. | 53 |

THE SORROWS OF THE CROSS.

SERMON I.

Bodily Pain.

“ And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him : and the third day He shall rise again.”—MATTHEW XX. 17-19.

THIS passage seems to contain the first direct notice which we have on record about that particular mode of death which was inflicted upon our Saviour. In the commencement of His ministry, He had said to the Jews, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John ii. 19). But the words were figurative, not understood at the time, nor did they define how that “temple of His Body” was to be destroyed. Afterwards He had announced His coming death in words which incited S. Peter “to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord : this shall not be unto Thee” (Matt. xvi. 22) ; so instinctively did the followers of Jesus shrink from the notion that He was to finish His mission by a violent death. The grave rebuke in which our Lord replies to His warm-hearted but misjudging Apostle is followed, indeed, by a saying which might or might not

have furnished at the time a hint as to the particular mode of His death, clear as His words appear to us after the event. "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (ver. 24).

The first distinct mention made by Jesus of the cross, will be found in His charge to the Apostles, when the original Apostolic commission was given to them: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 38). But in neither of these two passages last quoted is crucifixion directly identified with the mode of death which Jesus was to suffer, though His words may have been intended to prepare their minds for the stern fact, which was one day to be brought before their eyes in all its terrible reality. Other passages might be cited, where Jesus speaks of His sufferings and death, but not, as it would seem, till near the close of His ministry did He distinctly specify that He was to die upon the cross.

He and others were going up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. On the way He communicated the awful tidings of His approaching crucifixion to the twelve Apostles, apart from the rest of their companions. What must they have thought of the announcement? What did S. Peter think of it? or S. John? or Judas Iscariot? S. Luke informs us in his account of the matter what their general feeling was. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke xviii. 34).

No doubt these words were hard for them at the time to understand. To us, the death upon the cross is a matter of historical fact, upon which our faith is founded. With the cross are blended our most solemn thoughts; round it gather our holiest aspirations, our hopes of a happy eternity; to us the cross has lost its shame, and has become our glory;

it is at once the ground plan (more or less) and the decoration of our churches; perhaps it stands near our bedside, or is worn about our persons. To the Apostles, the cross came, in the first instance, with very different associations from those which have clustered round our earliest childhood, have deepened with our manhood, will, as we trust, become intensified with our advancing years. To them the cross spoke only of excruciating pain (the very word "excruciating" derives its significance from the cross), of disgrace, and utter contempt. Crucifixion was not the usual mode of execution among the Jews; the Roman conquest had introduced it there. Even among the Romans it was reserved for slaves and the vilest malefactors. No wonder, then, that the Apostles shrank from the idea that their Master was to suffer in such a way.

Have we ever tried to realize to ourselves what death by crucifixion implies? It was abolished by Constantine, and the same feeling which prompted him to abolish that mode of execution would lead a Christian nation to perpetuate the abolition.*

When a person was condemned under the Roman law to be crucified, the mode in which the sentence was carried out was this. The condemned person was first stripped and scourged, then bound to a column. The scourging was inflicted with the heavy *flagellum*, sometimes made more terrible by pointed nails fastened into it. When the scourging was over, the clothes were put on again, and the condemned person had to carry his cross to the place of execution. S. John says of Jesus, "And He bearing His cross went forth" (John xix. 17); but it would seem that He was unequal to the burden, and so Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, was compelled to bear it for Him. The

* The following sketch is taken from Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. "Crucifixion."

place of execution was outside the city. "Jesus also . . . suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12), and modern researches tend to show that the place of His execution was on a part of Mount Moriah, outside what was then the city wall, north of the Temple, not far from the Roman governor's Prætorium. What a witness against the sin, both of Jew and Gentile ! The crucified One hanging in sight of the Temple, and of the Prætorium !

At the place of execution, the clothes of the condemned person were taken from him, and became the perquisite of the guard. The cross was driven into the ground, the person was lifted on it, his feet being about a foot or two from the ground. Sometimes he was fastened to the cross as it lay on the ground, the cross and victim being then raised together. Before the nailing of the hands and feet, a cup of drugged wine was not unusually given to the sufferer, to produce stupefaction. Strange contradiction ! for men to invent a most torturing death, then to undo a part of their own work of torture ! The drugged wine was offered to our Lord, but He would not taste it, and it must not be confounded with the acid wine afterwards offered Him in the sponge on the hyssop. To shorten the lingering pain of dying, fracture of the limbs was sometimes employed, as in the case of the two malefactors. It was not the custom of the Romans to take down the corpse,* but a concession was made to the Jews, in consequence of the prohibition in their law (Deut. xxi. 23), and they were allowed to take down and bury the lifeless remains. The actual sufferings of a crucified person have been thus classified :

1. The state of extreme tension, the arms being outstretched, the body unable to move, is, in itself, most trying.

2. The parts where the nails are driven in, are a perfect

* "Non pascet in cruce corvos." (Horace, Ep. I. xvi. 48.)

network of nerves and tendons, especially sensitive to pain.

3. The pierced parts soon fester and turn to gangrene.

4. The fulness of the blood-vessels in the head causes pressure on the brain, and the sensation of acute distress.

5. Thus the suffering becomes more and more intense as the strength fails, yet some time passes before the vital parts are actually seized.

6. A state of fever is produced, and the thirst is intense.

7. To the above may be added—exposure to a burning sun, alternating with the pinching cold of night. On Good Friday, however, the sun was darkened, and before night the worn-out frame had given up the animating spirit.

The above outline has been given that we may remind ourselves what crucifixion really means, for it may be that we often use the word with a very inadequate notion of the terrible reality which it represents. If the details, of which this brief summary has been given, will at all help to impress upon our hearts what Jesus endured for our sakes, they will not have been mentioned in vain. May the Spirit of God make us more and more alive to all that Jesus endured for us, more thankful for His stupendous work of self-sacrifice, more resolved to root out those sins for which these sufferings paid the penalty !

How should we feel if we were called upon to suffer the like for our own sins ? And how should we feel if some innocent person had to suffer like torture for what we had done ?—if some child of ours were nailed to the cross because we had sinned ? Yet this is what God has done for us. The Father has given His Only Begotten Son to endure for us one of the most torturing, lingering deaths that human malice has ever devised. The Son has shown Himself willing to do the Father's will. He hid not His face (before which angels tremble and adore) “ from shame and

spitting" (Isa. l. 6). He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8).

Can we think upon this great work of love and mercy without wishing to make some return? Did Jesus really endure these bitter pains, that last dread penalty of cruel death, because we are sinful creatures? Then let the thought of what He suffered, the memory of what He endured, restrain us from indulging ourselves in sins which brought upon Him such heavy suffering, and which will lay up for us hereafter "the bitter pains of eternal death," if we will not turn from them and repent. Let each one thus address his soul, and say, "Did Jesus really endure this for me?" Then let me be more watchful over myself, more grateful to Him, more careful not to offend. Is Satan tempting me to sin, as he tempted Him to sin? Then let the recollection of those wounded hands and feet, that racked frame, that heavy-laden head, that feverish heat, that parching thirst, act upon me as a restraining guard. Let me answer the tempter thus: "Sins such as this one which you would have me do, cost my Saviour His life, brought upon Him pangs the most acute that human nature can endure. All this my God hath borne for me. 'How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' " (Gen. xxxix. 9).

While from the bodily pangs endured upon the cross, those who are in health and strength may learn not to give way to sins of the flesh, but to keep their bodies holy unto the Lord, you on whose frames has been laid the burden of feeble health or of acute, long-protracted pain, may find in the contemplation of your Saviour's bodily sufferings on the cross something which may support and comfort you in your weary hours of trial, something which may turn your aches and sufferings into joy. This was the path your Saviour trod, the path of acute bodily pain. This may, by God's

blessing, help to sustain and comfort you under your trial. The natural religious instinct of man would indeed lead him to cry to God for help, when he was suffering from pain which no human remedy could reach. But, as Christians, we can make our appeal to One who, in His own Person, has experienced what intense pain of the body is. Those six hours, when He was dying by inches on the cross, have consecrated bodily pain as part of His heavenly discipline, not laid, indeed, upon all, but laid upon each as each is able to bear it, laid often upon those who in spirit are most like Himself, who in conduct endeavour to conform themselves to His example, who in His providence are made partakers in His sufferings here upon earth, that they may become partakers in a higher share of His glory in heaven hereafter. Ye prisoners of pain, yet also "ye prisoners of hope," "to you is the word of this salvation sent" (Zech. ix. 12 ; Acts xiii. 26). Your sufferings are, by the Spirit of grace, making you more and more like your crucified Saviour.

Lord Jesus,

By Thy scourged Body, have mercy upon us !
By the burden of the cross laid on Thy fainting Frame,
By the wounds which pierced Thy Hands and Feet,
By the agony of Thine outstretched Limbs,
By Thy fevered Brow, By Thy parching thirst,
By Thy painful death,

Have mercy upon us !

SERMON II.

Ridicule.

"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn."—PSALM XXII. 7.

THE bodily suffering which crucifixion implies has been traced in brief outline. But pain and death we share in common with the lower orders of creation. Man has higher powers; has, therefore, susceptibilities which they have not. As he rises to enjoyments of which they are not capable, so also is he liable to sufferings from which they are exempt by their lower place in the scale of creation. There are pains of the mind, as well as of the body; wounds to the feelings and affections, as well as to the limbs; tortures of the spirit, as well as of the framework of clay which that spirit animates. Which is the most severe form of suffering? Those who have experienced both will, from their experience, be enabled to say. Those who have not will remember what is written in the Book of Proverbs: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. xviii. 14).

Let us revert to the words of our text. The Psalmist is here speaking prophetically in the person of the suffering, crucified Messiah. We can be in no doubt upon this point. The opening words of the Psalm the Saviour upon the cross appropriates to Himself, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If further evidence were wanted, we have that which is, in one point of view, the most convincing

of all evidence ; we have the testimony of unbelievers. The enemies of Jesus themselves applied this Psalm to Him as He hung upon the cross. How little did they think what a damning witness they were giving against their own souls, when they taunted Jesus of Nazareth in the very words which prophecy had already employed to portray the insults that were to be heaped upon the Messiah ! "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him : let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him" (ver. 8, marg.). Little were those rough Roman soldiers aware, when they received each his fourth share of the outer garments which the crucified One had worn, and had cast lots for the inner seamless coat, that these were the very particulars which the poet-king had long ago celebrated in one of the most deeply affecting of all his "songs of Zion : " "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture" (ver. 18).

We might go on to notice many other points in which the royal seer, piercing with prophetic glance through the dim vista of the future to the dark hours of the Crucifixion, anticipates the awful transactions of that dreadful, yet saving, day.

But let us confine ourselves to our text. One would suppose that, if justice did absolutely require a condemned person to be executed, at least the suffering of the sufferer would be held sacred. As we try to realize the scene on Calvary, one wonders how any one could have the heart even to look at the appalling spectacle. It would seem more natural to turn away the eye from gazing at One who, clothed in a human tabernacle like ourselves, was slowly expiring under circumstances of such horror. Yet there were multitudes who on that day looked on Him whom their wills, if not their actual hands, had pierced ; and the last mortal agonies of One whose whole life had been spent

in doing good to all, were made a matter, not of mournful spectacle, but of heartless jesting.

Consider, then, how much this adds to the suffering of the crucified One. When the Son of God became man, He took to Himself not merely the bodily part of manhood, but all that makes up and completes our inner constitution—all that distinguishes man as such. We know how He was moved with compassion; we are told how, in the synagogue, He “looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark iii. 5). He had, then, our sense of shame—that natural dislike which we all have so strongly of being made a subject of ridicule. How acute is this feeling in all of us! How doubly acute is this feeling when we are in pain or trouble! And if that pain or trouble is itself made a subject of jesting, is it too much to say that we feel such ill-timed jesting more than all the rest beside?

Now, this was exactly what Jesus had to bear. During those hours when exhausted nature was tediously, painfully, wearily sinking beneath its accumulated burdens, He had to hear and to bear the taunts and reproaches of those who made His agonies the subject of their bitter and biting mirth. It seems hardly possible to conceive how human beings could have so outraged all the better feelings of their nature. But “the wicked is driven away in his wickedness” (Prov. xiv. 32). Men become, by their own bad passions, maddened into devils; the milk of human kindness curdles and turns to gall.

Let us remind ourselves of one or two particulars recorded by the Evangelists. Scourging generally preceded crucifixion, and this was so in our Lord’s case. When Pilate at last gave way to the popular clamour, Jesus was given over into the hands of the Roman soldiers, who, after the preliminary scourging, but before the fastening to the

cross, proceeded to make their Prisoner the victim of their coarse, brutal insolence. The whole guard gathered round Him in the quarters of the Roman governor, took His own clothes from Him, and threw round Him a crimson, or purple, cloak; a crown of thorns (probably from the twigs of the prickly acacia) was platted and placed round His Head; a reed (a mock sceptre) was placed in His right hand; in mockery they pretended to offer the Eastern homage to Him as King—the mock salutation was bandied from mouth to mouth, “Hail, King of the Jews!” While some were thus jeering, others were spitting on Him or striking His Head with the reed. Was there no bystander to show compassion? We do not read that there was one. “His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isa. lii. 14). “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting” (Isa. l. 6). When the soldiers were weary of their brutal jests, they took off the mock-royal cloak, and put His own garments again upon Him.

This must have aggravated His bodily sufferings, for a Roman scourging was no light matter, and the wounded, bruised frame must have suffered acutely from the putting on and off of raiment. This, however, is not the main point at present. It is the utter heartlessness and brutality of the whole transaction. Who does not feel how a generous, sensitive nature shrinks from scenes such as took place in Pilate’s quarters?

Ye who are in the habit of indulging your low, angry passions, whose hearts are becoming hardened to the sufferings of others, think on the Roman soldiers on the early morning of the day of Crucifixion! Do you wish to be thought like them now, to be judged like them hereafter? In their likeness see your own. That is what you are in

heart; that is what you will come to in act, if you go on in a low, brutalizing course of vice, or even in the sullen indifference of careless living. Shall the thought of those insults heaped upon the Saviour be all in vain? Will not the memory of that reviled One wake up the sparks of a better nature within you? Will not His patience under these insults melt the hardness of your hearts, and bring you kneeling, not (as these Roman soldiers knelt) in scorn and mockery, but in deep sorrow, earnest repentance, loving faith, at the feet of the crucified One? God grant you may so come! But remember the choice must be made now. Will you take your stand with Jesus or with His coarse tormentors?

It may be said all this is the work of men who knew no better; who, by birth, education, habit, were not likely to be moved by any of the softer, finer feelings in our nature. And, to do the Roman soldiers justice, the example had already been set them by one for whom the poor excuse cannot possibly be made.

It will be remembered that Pilate, willing to shift from his own shoulders the responsibility of condemning an innocent person, sent Jesus to Herod, as being governor of Galilee. Herod is called by the title of king; he was in the habit of doing kingly honours to those over whom he was placed. He could entertain on a festive occasion the civil, the military, and the provincial magnates of his tetrarchy. He knew how to behave when he thought it worth his while. When Jesus was sent to him by Pilate, Herod was at first glad, for his curiosity had long been excited, and with that craving after novelty which worn-out men of the world have, he hoped to see some extraordinary display of power. In this expectation he was disappointed. Then, finding that the chief priests and scribes vehemently accused Jesus, this specimen of royalty proceeds to insult and ridicule his

Prisoner. "And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him." (Luke xxiii. 11). It would seem that with him originated the idea of arraying our Lord in that dress which was a mockery of royalty. And here comes out the real nature of the man. Birth, station, power, wealth, education, had not refined his heart. He was a coarse, vulgar man. Licentious, cruel, cunning, we know him to be from other evidence. Here, when he was not beset by any of these particular temptations, he shows himself to be a low, unfeeling person. Jesus came before him as a Prisoner. There is a certain respect due from a judge to a prisoner. This Herod utterly forgot. Poor man! He, the petty tetrarch of a small province, knew not that the Person of whom he was making a jest was King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus was laughed to scorn, not only by the lowest, but by the highest in society. The king on his throne, the soldiers in their camp, turned all His sufferings "to laughter and contempt."

Was there no class to whom Jesus could turn for sympathy? The soldiers were heathens, Herod belonged to the blood of Esau, not to that of Jacob. Were the sons of Israel carried away by the general infatuation? Alas! Jacob, no less than Esau, joins in laughing Jesus to scorn, and that under circumstances of peculiar aggravation.

When Herod with his men of war set Jesus at nought, the full weight of the trial had not come. Jesus was not as yet fastened to the cross. It was after He was actually on the cross that the sons of Israel poured out upon Him all the vials of their scorn and contempt. The scorn of Herod was that of a careless, heartless, and it may in his case be added, vulgar man of the world. The scorn of the soldiers was that of low brutality. The scorn of the Jews was that of black malignity. Those that passed by threw His own

words in His teeth, "wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself" (Matt. xxvii. 39, 40). Nor is this feeling confined to the mere mob, who take up a cry often without knowing why or wherefore. The leading men of the nation, those who were looked up to as the guardians of religious knowledge, as the authorized conductors of religious worship, —they too joined in offering their tribute of insult at the very time when the sufferings of Jesus on the cross ought to have commanded their silence, if nothing more. But chief priests, scribes, and elders, they too joined in the cry of the multitude, if indeed they did not lead it, and they turned to fatal account their knowledge of prophecy by quoting (to their own condemnation) the very words in which their malignity had been portrayed centuries before. "Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 41-43). No wonder that the soldiers renewed their mockery, offering their sour wine (Luke xxiii. 36). "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth" (Matt. xxvii. 44).

It has been shown now in how complete a sense the words of our text were fulfilled. Jesus drank the cup of insult and scorn down to the very dregs. Consider this point, then, in connection with His bodily sufferings, the writhings of a wounded soul.

How did Jesus bear it all? With the most entire resignation, with the most implicit meekness, with the most tender love. No word of reproach passed His lips. No look of scorn repaid the scornful looks of His persecutors. None of their insults provoked Him to one angry gesture, to

one contemptuous expression. All the contumely heaped upon Him did but call forth the depth of His love. The more they hated, the more He loved, the more He was moved to prayer. And His prayer was not, "Father, punish these My executioners according to their deserving," but, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

Ye who have ever laughed at the religious convictions of others, who have tried, by sneers, scoffs, ridicule, insults, to turn aside a humble sinner who was seriously turning to God, carry yourselves in thought back to the day of the Crucifixion. Ask yourselves, in all honesty, whether you wish to be reckoned with the mocking Herod, with the coarse soldiery, with the malignant priesthood. If you do not wish to be so reckoned, if you shudder at the very idea of being thought like one of them, pause before you go further; reflect before you laugh at a man for doing right, before you try to laugh him out of doing right. For if you do, you are but following the example of those who laughed the suffering Saviour to scorn.

We may draw another very useful lesson from the above considerations. We have all of us a dislike to be ridiculed, especially for doing what is right. And the dread of ridicule often prevents us from doing what we know to be right, and what we have a secret wish to do. For instance, there are not a few persons who are deterred from attending the Holy Communion because they are afraid that, by so doing, they will draw down upon themselves contemptuous remarks. Again, when a man has been in the habit of neglecting all religious worship and duties on the Lord's day, something happens to him, a change takes place within him—he thinks he will come to church; on the way he meets some of his old friends, and they make insulting remarks upon him, because they see him with his face

towards church instead of away from it, and he becomes so alive to their taunts, that he allows himself to be laughed out of his good resolutions, and so falls back into his former godless ways. Or a man thinks he will break off some sin, such as excessive drinking or the like, and then his former companions laugh at him, as going to set up for a sober man, or a chaste man, and the like; and so, unable to withstand their ridicule, he falls back into his old bad habits. In all these cases, the dread of men's scorn is at the bottom of the mischief. It may be useful to bear in mind what the wise man has written: "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation" (Ecclus. ii. 1).

There must be something to try your sincerity. If you are spared the test of pain, you must learn to bear the test of scorn. Remember that Jesus bore for you both pain and scorn, each in its most aggravated form. Call to mind how He bore patiently all the insults and derision that the varied forms of human malice could possibly inflict upon Him. If that be the cross you have to bear, take it up with a willing mind, bear it with a patient soul day after day, if hereunto you are called. He who bore scorn for you will help you to bear scorn for Himself. He who said of Himself, in the voice of prophecy, "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn," will hear from heaven, His dwelling-place, the prayers of those among His servants whom He calls to suffer shame, reproach, and disgrace for His Name's sake. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v. 11, 12).

SERMON III.

Ingratitude.

"For it was not an enemy that reproached Me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated Me, that did magnify himself against Me; then I would have hid Myself from him: but it was thou, a man Mine equal, My guide, and Mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."—PSALM LV. 12-14.

AMONG the many trials to which our human nature is subject, there is none, perhaps, that we feel more acutely than to have our confidence betrayed, our kindness repaid by treachery, our love by ingratitude. Our own great poet has described, in one of his most terrible yet most touching scenes—

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child."

This is one form out of many which that most unlovely sin, ingratitude, can take. In all its forms, that which wounds us to the quick, that which stings us to the heart, is the serpent's fang, the serpent's venom. When he who should have been on my side turns against me, when he who called himself my friend is seen among my enemies, the heart turns sick, I lose all faith in human honesty, my arm becomes unnerved, I feel as if I could fight no longer.

"Oh, how hast thou with jealousy infected
The sweetness of affiance!"

says the king to his bosom friend, who had become a conspirator to take away his sovereign's life.

"I will weep for thee,
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man."

But centuries before Shakespeare wrote, a greater, a more world-wide poet (if such a phrase may be allowed) had portrayed in its proper colour the blackness of ingratitude. It was that royal poet, whose words have been taken for the text. And herein he did not simply (as poets are, indeed, allowed to do) draw upon his imagination. David drew from the deep stores of his own bitter experience. He knew personally what it was to have an aching heart; he knew what it was to have his feelings wounded in their most tender and sensitive part; he had felt the acute anguish when (not the body, but) the soul is stabbed by the false-heartedness of a treacherous friend: "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. lv. 21). We need not stay to inquire whether it was the cruelty of Saul, the perfidy of Ahithophel, or the unnatural rebellion of Absalom which was the occasion of writing this Psalm; for the poet mounts up from the particular to the general, and, from his own individual experience, frames a larger representative experience, which shall hold good, not for himself only, but for others as well. So let us now contemplate what is here described, and ask our own hearts whether the description is not true.

Yet there is one special application which no Christian congregation could for one moment forget. David wrote not as a poet only, but as a prophet. He spoke of One who was to suffer as he had himself suffered, but with the aggravation of the bitterness in all its fulness.

In this special application, then, I propose to consider

the words of the text. For the time, let David retire into the background, and let us fix the eye of faith on Him of whom David was a type, in his personal affliction, in his royal exaltation. We have hitherto considered the pains which Jesus suffered in His Body—that open “contradiction of sinners,” which He endured in the form of violence, lawless, yet feigning to act under law; we have seen how He had to put up with insult, scorn, and utter shame. We have now to consider how the sorrows of the cross included also the heart-sickening pain which ingratitude and treachery naturally produce in the heart of man.

Surely during those six hours when Jesus hung upon the cross He could not but have thought about His previous ministry, and the remarkable way in which He had been brought into contact with sufferers of every description. What is the main characteristic of His ministry on earth? S. Peter bears his witness: “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts x. 38). Here was the spirit of good counter-working in full activity against the spirit of evil. Here was the blessed influence from the throne of God restoring man to “perfect soundness” of health, repairing the ravages which sin had brought into the world, bringing in a new system of things, the prelude to that completed system of things when pain and sickness shall be no more, when “sorrow and sighing shall flee away,” “and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Isa. xxxv. 10; Rev. xxi. 4). We know but a very small part of all that Jesus did during the three years of His public ministry. Count up His miracles that are left on record; they amount to thirty-three or there-

abouts. Even in these, when we come to turn them over in our hearts, we find more and more how inexhaustible is the love from which they flowed. But how many more similar works of mercy were there wrought by Him about which we know absolutely nothing at all? We read of His making journeys again and again in more than one district. He visited not cities only, but towns, villages, country places, healing all that were brought to Him. Can we suppose that in each place which He visited there was any poor sufferer who was not brought to Him? We read of His being occupied even "when the sun was setting," in works of this kind, when "all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke iv. 40). We read of multitudes following Him from place to place; on one occasion five thousand men, and on another four thousand besides women and children, thronged round Him in the desert, and there, where exhausted nature began to fail under long abstinence from food, there, where no ordinary supplies were to be had, He, from the scantiest store, had fed them to the full, and so impressed were the multitudes with a sense of His power and benevolence, that on one of these occasions they would have made Him their king.

On the day of the Crucifixion, where were all these? Among all the many objects of His healing mercy, not one came forward to say, "This was He who cured me of my plague." Surely some of them must have been at Jerusalem to keep the Passover. Where were the blind to whom He had given sight? Where were the deaf whose ears He had unstopped; the dumb whom He had caused to speak; the lame whom He had made to walk; the lepers whom He had cleansed; the demoniacs whom he had dispossessed of their tormentors; the dead whom He had raised? So little, when the tide turned, when the popular cry set in against Jesus,

could men have the courage to avow that they were His friends, or even the gratitude to say, "This was He who did for me more than all the world beside." I ask, then, must it not have been one aggravation of our Saviour's sufferings to think, as He suffered, "Not one among the thousands to whom I have done good but is now ashamed to confess that he is under an obligation to Jesus of Nazareth"?

Was there no other bitter memory of a kindred kind then present to the heart of Jesus? A small but chosen band there was who had been especially attached to His Person, who had been selected from their countrymen to be in close attendance upon Him, to be the heralds of His mercy, to heal in His Name, in His Name to cast out demons, in His Name to do many wonderful works. Could they have been in such close attendance upon Him, and not have become most deeply attached to Him? They had become so. We have the word of Jesus for it. He says to them, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke xxii. 28). To them He had talked with all the unreserved confidence of an intimate Friend; for them He had prayed that their strength might not fail, that they might be kept from the world and from the evil one. He had loved them with a love which we cannot presume to fathom. They had loved Him with an affection which, if human and therefore imperfect, was at least sincere. They had been with Him up to the moment of His apprehension; had previously been partakers in the last Paschal Supper—the first of Christian Communion; had heard those marvellous words, concluding with the consecration prayer of Jesus, which occupy so many chapters in the Gospel of the beloved disciple. With all the associations of His ministry accumulated in their memories, with His words of divine power and divine love ringing in

their ears and stamped upon their hearts, they accompany Him—where? Leaving that upper chamber, passing out through the city gate, going down into the valley of the Kedron, they ascend the first slope of Olivet, and are in the well-known retreat—the Garden of Gethsemane. There, betrayed by one of their number, who had previously left the upper chamber for that purpose, He is apprehended by an armed multitude. And what happened? “Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” (Matt. xxvi. 56).

Could it really be so? They who more than any others had known who He was; who by the mouth of Peter had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God,—could they not stand by Him in the hour of His trial? Alas! so infirm of purpose is human nature that, when the hour of trial comes, it is ever likely to give way. We must not rely on warm attachment or even on strong affection (both of these the eleven Apostles had), until both one and the other have been tested by severe trial, and have, by God’s grace, not been found wanting. But among the pangs which Jesus endured on the cross must have been the thought that those who loved Him so well, and who had been, on the whole, faithful to His cause, had failed Him in His hour of greatest need,—had not been constant unto death, even though they had just before professed that, though they should die with Him, yet would they not deny Him.

But as yet the cross was foolishness unto them. All their love, all their zeal could not brace them to confess Christ crucified. It remained for another Teacher—the Comforter—to bring that lesson practically home to them, and to enable them to carry out, in their lives and by their martyrdoms, their preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. For the present, Jesus suffers, and His Apostles, who are to convert the world, are scattered “every man to his own” (John xvi. 32).

Yet two among their number did so far recover the general panic that they actually followed their Master into the palace of the high priest ; not, however, taking part with Him, not owning themselves to be His, but "to see the end" (Matt. xxvi. 58). Not owning themselves to be His ! Alas ! much more than this ! One of the two expressly denies that he is His, doing so three times over, backing up his denials with oath and imprecation—"I do not know the Man." Can this be Peter, who made the good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" ? Can this be Peter, who said repeatedly, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death ;" "though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee" (Luke xxii. 33 ; Matt. xxvi. 35) ? It is so in sad truth. There stands Peter, in the open quadrangle of the high priest's palace, warming himself by the fire, for the chill of the early morning is upon him ; and three several times in the space of about one hour he solemnly declares, "I do not know Jesus of Nazareth." As he stood below in the court-yard, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke xxii. 61). How that look cut the sinning Apostle to the heart we are expressly told. Was it no pain to the human nature of Jesus that the very Apostle to whom He had said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. xvi. 18), should have publicly denied, three times over, all acquaintance with the Teacher who had thus marked him out, though his heart must have told him all the while that he was bound to that Teacher by cords of love, by every grateful feeling that could endear one person to another ? The Apostle who had been the first to confess has now denied his Lord.

S. Peter sinned. S. Peter had grace to repent. There was another Apostle who sinned, but who did not repent, having sinned away (as it would seem) the grace of repent-

ance. On a subject so very awful let our words be few. We know that the unhappy man had like advantages with his brethren : like them, he was in close personal attendance upon Jesus ; like them, he preached the word of salvation ; like them, he confirmed the word with signs following. But, unlike them, he had not been faithful to his trust ; he had allowed himself to tamper with his conscience ; he had been in the habit of purloining from the fund which was the common property of Jesus and the twelve. At last, the love of money, which is the root of all evil, had so eaten into his soul that for thirty pieces of silver (the price of a slave) he made an unholy compact with the enemies of Jesus to betray his Master to them.

Without some such covenant the apprehension of Jesus would (humanly speaking) have been difficult, if not impossible. For some days previous He had showed Himself openly in the courts of the Temple, confronting boldly the various parties among the Jews. Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, had in turn been answered. All had been silenced. "And no man after that durst ask Him any question ;" "and the common people heard Him gladly ;" "and all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple, for to hear Him" (Mark xii. 34, 37 ; Luke xxi. 38).

An apprehension in the daytime would occasion "an uproar among the people." But if the enemies of Jesus could seize Him privately, under cover of night, then they might hurry on a mock trial, and rely on the fickle nature of the multitude to raise a popular cry against Him. To do this, there must be some one to show them where, when, and how ; some one who knew the habits and haunts of Jesus ; some one who could come and tell them, "He is now in such a place ; now is your time." A friend could do this. This was what Judas undertook to do, and what he did. He

"was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts i. 16), and pointed Him out to the soldiers by giving Him the salutation of peace. What a pang must it have been to receive that salutation, and to be aware of its dreadful meaning! What an addition to His weight of sorrow on the cross to think that He had been brought there by the treachery of one who had been His companion and His own familiar friend, and that even His death would not redeem "the son of perdition," who by transgression fell from his ministry and Apostleship "that he might go to his own place" (Acts i. 25)!

It remains for us to put the question seriously to ourselves—Have we been grateful enough for all the blessings which the ministry and the crucifixion of Jesus have conferred on the world at large, on ourselves in particular? On the world at large—for even the opponents of Christianity cannot deny that, since the gospel has been preached throughout the world, the tone of morality has been raised, society has been purified. On ourselves—for though it be true that we cannot now point to those gifts of healing which marked in so emphatic a manner the first coming of Jesus, yet, if the healing power of His grace has at all done its work within our souls, that is a higher marvel, that is a more pregnant instance of His love, than the cure of the most acute sickness or the most protracted debility under which humanity ever laboured. If the grace of Christ can cure us of a bad, angry temper; can purify the springs of thought, so that the sins of the flesh, so plainly rebuked in the Epistle of the day,* have no power to seduce us from the path of perfect purity; can make us less and less fond of the world and of ourselves, more and more full of love to Christ and the brethren;—I say if this healing work has gone on in our souls, what thanks do we not owe to Him

* Third Sunday in Lent.

who hath called us "out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9)?

Are we the real friends to Him that we profess ourselves to be? When He calls us to make some sacrifice for His Name's sake, are we ready to make it? Are we prepared to follow Him, when to do so will expose us to unpleasant remarks or involve some worldly loss? If we cannot do this; if, when tried, we have failed to do this;—then are we rather like the disciples who fled than that one disciple who recovered from the general panic, and had the courage to stand by the cross and publicly own the mother of his Lord. The courage of love brought the Apostle of love within hearing of his Saviour's dying words. And with him were those to whom love lent a courage not their own—the devoted women who followed Jesus from Galilee; with him "there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (John xix. 25). Will you take your stand there with them, or be like those who fled when danger was close at hand?

SERMON IV.

Disappointment.

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! ”—MATTHEW XXIII. 37.

CAN anything exceed the depth of tenderness expressed in this beautiful lamentation of the Saviour over Jerusalem? It would seem, from comparing the accounts of the different Evangelists, that He used actually the same words on a previous occasion, and that the same sentiment of affectionate attachment to the city finds expression on another occasion different from the former two (Luke xiii. 34, xix. 41, 42).

Let us try to get a clear notion about these three occasions. According to S. Matthew, our blessed Lord uttered the words of the text just before He was leaving the Temple for the last time. He had there been publicly assailed by captious questions from different religious and political parties among the Jews. Having effectually answered these questions, He reduced His opponents to silence by putting a question to them which they were unable to answer. He then publicly, before His disciples and the multitude, denounced the sins of the scribes and Pharisees, and openly charged them with “all the righteous blood” which had been “shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of

Barachias" (Matt. xxiii. 35). Then, turning in one moment from indignant denunciation to pathetic lamentation, He mourns over the wilfulness that had rejected His ministry of mercy, and foretells the coming desolation of "the holy city." All this took place in the enclosure of the Temple, which He then left, proceeding immediately, with four of His Apostles, to the Mount of Olives, where was, where still is, the most striking view of Jerusalem.

In Luke xiii. 34 Jesus is described as using the very same words. But the time, place, and occasion were different. Jesus was then not in Jerusalem, but journeying towards it (ver. 22). He was in the district, and so far within the power of Herod, for He had been warned, "Get Thee out, and depart hence : for Herod will kill Thee" (ver. 31). It was in His reply to this warning that He uttered, nearly in the same terms, the words of the text.

And yet once more (Luke xix. 41, 42). When in the course of that same journey He was come near to Jerusalem, "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes." It is thought that the actual spot may even now be identified on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem, as it winds round the southern shoulder of the Mount of Olives. There is a turn where suddenly the view of the whole city bursts upon the eye spread out as on a map. Even now the sight stirs up all the deepest feelings in our nature, although the city is, in her age of woe, trodden under foot by unbelievers. What must the sight have been when Jesus beheld it ! Stained with foulest crimes as the Herod family were, they were yet not wanting in grandeur of conception, and their public works had done much to embellish Jerusalem. The Temple had been so restored that the restoration amounted almost to a rebuilding. To this day the masonry of

Solomon's period is traced quite distinct from the masonry of the Herodian date, and "the goodly stones and gifts" with which the Temple was adorned were specially pointed out to Jesus as He left the building. It is not a little remarkable that these restorations went on after our Lord's death, and were only completed a few years before city and Temple were destroyed. This Jesus foreknew. Can we wonder that the sight of the city in its beauty drew tears from the fountain of His human tenderness, when He thought how soon that beauty was to perish?

It is clear from these distinct notices that the love of Jesus to Jerusalem was a deep-seated, habitual affection in His soul. It was not the mere outburst of momentary enthusiasm (if such a word may be used in reference to Him), which the sight of a beautiful city might call forth. There were other and more abiding motives which elicited the pathetic exclamation in the text.

The Saviour was deeply attached to His native land. The country which He honoured by selecting it as the place of His birth, He further honoured by His love. His human affections grew round and clung to that locality which was the great centre of the nation's religious and civil life, the place which God had chosen as His own especial sanctuary. The love of our country is natural to the heart of man. Who does not love the home of his tender years, "the church where first he knelt"? Is it too much, then, to say that a feeling so deeply implanted in our human nature was also a part of our Lord's human nature? And if this be so, has He not given the highest consecration to that which we call, in one word, "patriotism"?

But there is a further cause which deepened the love of Jesus to His country. That land had been for many generations the appointed place where God made His will known upon earth. There, amid the darkness, foulness, and cruelty

of heathenism, a witness had been borne from age to age that God is a God of light, purity, and mercy. There for centuries prophets had revealed His counsels, priests had offered up their divinely appointed sacrifices. There on Mount Moriah had bled those countless victims whose blood, unable to take away sin, had been the continued prophetic representation of that One Blood which, and which alone, could and should make an absolute and plenary atonement for the sin of the world. That threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, over which the Temple was built, would seem as though it were the spot of all others where the fulness of the idea of atonement had centred. There the Lord had been intreated for Israel; there the plague was stayed; there for successive generations had been offered that which to the Jewish mind was the atonement—that which to the Christian mind is the shadow and prefiguring type of the One Atonement which was to come.

If this feeling of attachment to His native country was so deeply implanted in the heart of Jesus, then among the sorrows of the cross must be counted the bitter feeling of disappointment at the way in which His country had treated Him. He came unto His own coasts, and His own people received Him not. He came to save His country; His countrymen would not be saved. His very divinity made His suffering more intense. He not only saw the extreme wilfulness of the moment, but He foresaw to what that wilfulness must inevitably lead. He saw the nation, as a nation, adding sin upon sin. He foresaw the fruits of that sin, the bitter fruits, which must come by an inexorable law. He foresaw their mutual quarrels, their fierce internal factions, the approach of the Roman eagles, the siege and devastation under Titus. This He knew would happen in about forty years' time from the day of His crucifixion, and that then would follow the dispersion of the sons and daughters of

Jerusalem over the whole face of the earth, a homeless, a despised, a persecuted race, sojourners in all countries, citizens of none. Jesus knew that the nation of which He was one member, would soon no longer be numbered among the nations of the world.

Jesus had warned His countrymen of their coming doom, but He had warned them in vain. He had called unto them, but they would not hear. He had invited them to return to the Lord their God, but they would not return. He had bidden them purify their hearts from their ambition, pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, from their intense self-seeking; but, driven on still in their wickedness, they went madly forwards, until at last, as if the whole nation—priests, scribes, rulers, and people—had been possessed of one monstrous throat, there arose, as with the deafening voice of thunder, the nation's cry, the terrible echoes of which have not died away in the long range of after-centuries, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

It was the nation who spoke out then. It was the nation who condemned Him, and who, in condemning Him, condemned itself. Must not this have been a bitter thought, that a nation, as a nation, should be untrue to itself, should deliberately commit the act which was to blot out its existence as a nation, was to brand its very name with infamy and disgrace through the ages that were to come? This might have been averted. Jesus had shown them how it might have been averted, but He had shown them to no purpose.

But if Jesus suffered from disappointed patriotism, He also consecrated that disappointment for all who might hereafter be called to suffer in a like way. Examples are by no means rare in history, both ancient and modern, of men who have deserved well of their country, and yet have been repaid by their country with ingratitude and neglect. It

gives us pain when we read of such cases. It would, no doubt, give us a lively pain if we were ourselves the sufferers. But let all who have honestly striven to do their duty by their country, yet have not had their efforts acknowledged, or their pains rewarded, reflect that, as Christians, they have the sympathy of Him who suffered from a similar cause, whose amount of suffering in that cause absolutely exhausts all that ever has been endured, all that can ever be imagined to happen, in a similar trial.

But not merely as a patriot must Jesus have suffered intensely on the cross. He had come especially as a Religious Teacher. He had come to show them the more excellent way. On their divine law He had shed a divine light, which came not reflected from any human medium, but which was an effulgence streaming down direct from the very centre of Light itself. He had told them of God. He had shown them, in His teachings, in His life, that the good, the true, and the beautiful are ever entwined in one mysterious threefold cord, which "is not quickly broken." All had been in vain. They had no heart to appreciate the good, no head to understand the true, no taste to apprehend the beautiful. Content to grovel in their own low, base, earthborn fancies, theories, pursuits, they refused to be raised in the scale of humanity, they refused to be drawn upward, nearer and nearer to God. As a nation, they refused to accept Him for their Religious Teacher, though the officers answered the chief priests and Pharisees, "Never man spake like this Man" (John vii. 46). If it be a bitter thought that good counsel given, as respects this world's interest, is rejected by those whom it might best have served; how much more bitter must have been the pang when He whose name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor," had set forth counsels, not merely for time, but for eternity, had declared to deaf ears and hard hearts the things that should

have been for their everlasting peace, and in return—had been crucified! Yet this was what Jesus had to bear. But they understood not the words of prophecy, and they rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

The death of Jesus on the cross was, as He declares, the crowning act to a long course of national sins of a similar description. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" asks S. Stephen at his trial (Acts vii. 52). As the death of Jesus was the seal to the past, so was it also the forerunner of the future. As He suffered, so were His Apostles called to suffer. And as His sufferings were the type, so were they also the consecration, of theirs. It is remarkable how the things which, humanly speaking, would have stopped the progress of Christianity, have been, under God's ordering, the very things that have made it advance. What, apparently, could be more hopeless than the cause of the gospel at the ninth hour on Good Friday? Yet the event which then took place was that which made the sure foundation for its peculiar and distinctive teaching, "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2).

It may be that the ministers of Christ are often disappointed that their ministrations do not produce more sensible effects on the communities where they are called to minister. They may remember how it is written, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. liii. 1). The very disappointment they feel, the hindrances under which they labour, may, under God's blessing, be working for the general good. At all events, they may learn humility, resignation, trust in God's providence; they may sustain themselves under their disappointment by the thought that they are not bearing so much as their Saviour had to bear. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God" (Isa. xlix. 4).

Let a nation reflect that the mere possession of high blessings, political and religious, does not, of necessity, give it vitality. They may turn to its condemnation and destruction, if they are not used aright.

We, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth" (Gal. iii. 1), by His written Word, by His preached Word, by His life-giving, life-sustaining sacraments, may do well to ask ourselves, "Has all this really brought me nearer to Jesus? Have I learned to know Him, and to love Him more? Have I longed for His righteousness, and to be gathered with His other children under the covering of His wings? Have I become more and more alive to the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore?"

SERMON V.

Sympathy.

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."—JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

WE may perhaps have remarked how, upon some dark day when the sky was overcast, one little cloud, as the day wore on, seemed to detach itself from the general mass and became fringed all round with a border of soft light. Even so, amid the blackness which gathers round the lingering hours of the Crucifixion, one cloud there is—a cloud indeed, but less heavy than the others; a cloud, but one upon which the light of heaven is poured, transforming it into a picture whose brighter colours are toned down by the surrounding gloom, by its own inherent mournfulness; yet still a picture on which the tearful eye and the heaving heart love to rest, with the grateful feeling that God-sent sorrow has a joy of its own. They who have ever experienced this joy will, from their experience, bear ready and thankful witness that, though therein the bitter has been mingled with the sweet, yet that the sweetness has in it something which is peculiarly its own—a purity, a refinement, which marks it out as the cordial of heaven, given to refresh an aching heart, sent to sustain a sinking spirit.

Ye children of God, whom God Himself has caused

to mourn ; ye whose souls He has pierced (as with a sword) by some one of His mysterious dispensations, to us quite unaccountable, the reasons and causes whereof lie treasured in the depth of His profound counsels ; ye mourners over some of those earthly ties which nature—that is, God—made sacred from the first, which retain their Catholic sacredness amid all the races that make up the great family of man, triumphing over false religions, and, where all else is false, witnessing to one thing that is true ;—come, stand in spirit under the cross, and learn how the sorrows of the cross have given double strength to that which is among the strongest of all human bonds, the mutual love of mother and son ! Learn from that mourning mother how sorrow may be borne ! Learn from that suffering Son that “love is strong as death” ! Learn from both that what was sacred before is doubly sacred now ! The mark of the cross is put on filial and maternal love, and stamps it as the King’s own—a part of the royalty of heaven.

Let us, then, stand awhile in spirit beneath the shadow of the cross, with the virgin mother of Jesus. Who is there that will not feel for her ? Oh let the Holy Spirit breathe over the dull and stagnant waters of our souls, call into play the sacred fountains of our sympathetic tears, and by the power of sympathy make her baptism of sorrow our own, that with her we may hereafter pass through its purifying waters into the calmness of that peace which only disciplined sufferers can know,—which only they “whom Heaven is teaching how to mourn” can truly appreciate.

That mourning mother, does she, as she stands by the cross, call to mind the prophecy which she heard some three and thirty years ago ? Do those mysterious words of the aged Simeon recur to her memory—“Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke ii. 35) ? These words were spoken to her in the hour of her joy ; I

will not say in the hour of her pride, for she was too humble to be proud ; but they were spoken to her in the hour when all was hers that could make a mother happy and thankful ; they were spoken when she came to present her firstborn Son in God's own Temple to God Himself. The hope of Israel, the desire of all nations, was the offspring of her womb. A mightier chorus than the sons of men can muster, even in the most stupendous of their crystal palaces, had made the birth of her Son the subject of their heaven-taught song, and the Spirit of God had declared, by the mouth of His aged and devout prophet, that the Child whom then, in all the thankfulness of a mother's heart, she had brought up to present to the Lord, was indeed "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel" (Luke ii. 32).

Then all was glad, then all was bright, except that one dark shadow was by anticipation thrown across the brightness of her road through life. The mother of Him who was to pass through suffering to glory, was not exempt from the law of suffering ; that law under which her Son worked out our salvation ; that law under which those "many sons" who are to be brought to glory are, in their measure, to work out theirs. She could not pass from the brightness of earth to the brightness of paradise without stepping down into the valley of the shadow of death ; she in her measure was, like her Son, to be made perfect by suffering.

What agony must it have been to her to witness with a mother's eye, made doubly acute by a mother's love, those sufferings of the Body, of which an outline has been attempted to be given, but of which the fullest description must fall so very far short of the terrible reality ! Those wounds, those tortures, that faintness, weariness, distress, she a mother has to witness, and do—what ? That which is the hardest thing of all—do nothing, do nothing but

submit, believe, and bear. What mother is there who would not suffer anything herself rather than see her child suffer? How often, when some poor little one is tossing to and fro on his narrow bed, restless with pain and fretful with weariness, has she who sat by that bedside through the tedious watches of the night, wished from her heart and prayed from her soul, "Oh that I might be allowed to bear what he is bearing, so that he might be free from pain! Oh that I might be ill, so that he might be well!" The mother of Jesus stands by His cross, and knows that she can, that she may do nothing for her Son, who is suffering protracted death-pangs there.

But further, what must a mother have felt to see her son, her firstborn son, whom she loved, not merely put to death by a cruel and lingering process, but treated as one of the vilest of malefactors, literally "numbered among the transgressors," condemned to a punishment reserved under the Roman law for slaves, described by the Jewish law as accursed! Mothers have indeed, ere now, from the noble, unselfish instinct of woman's nature, surrendered their sons when their country, the common mother of all, called upon them to make what to a mother's heart is the greatest sacrifice of all. How many mothers have parted with those whom nature had marked out as the prop of their declining years and failing strength, content to live on in the desolation of utter loneliness, sooner than that their son should flinch from his work; sooner than that upon his escutcheon should rest the indelible stain—"This was he who went not forth when honour summoned him to go"! How many English mothers are now * in deepest mourning for their

* Isandula, January 22, 1879. Adde funestum illum diem, quo Princeps animosus, Imperatricis viduae filius unicus, contra hostes Angliae fortiter dimicans, morti praeponeretur, multis flebilis, intempestive occubuit.—*Kal. Jun. 1879.*

sons, cut down in the prime of their manhood, in the flower of their age, in the beauty of youth, leaving behind them their ghastly remains on that hideous battle-field, where valour fought in vain against overpowering numbers and relentless savages ; yet leaving also behind them a name and a fame which is to live in the page of English history. Some consolation in all such cases there is, and it is not a small one. It is that consolation with which of old the statesman orator cheered his Athenian fellow-citizens, when they were mourning over those who had died in battle : "For of illustrious men the whole earth is the sepulchre ; and not only does the inscription upon columns in their own land point it out, but in that also which is not their own there dwells with every one an unwritten memorial of the heart rather than of a material monument." *

Far other record was that which Jesus had in His mother-land. His column was the ignominious cross, His inscription that mocking title (which yet witnessed to a deeper truth than he who wrote it recked of), "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "This title then read many of the Jews" (John xix. 19, 20) ; and, as they read it, must not the thought have come across their minds, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46). The mother of Jesus cannot console herself with the persuasion that her Son is dying the death of a hero. He is dying the death of the vilest criminal, His companions in death are known as robbers—bold, bad men. Sooner than that He should be reprieved from the cross, a rebel, a robber, and a murderer is released from prison and suffered to be at large. No burst of popular enthusiasm upheld the suffering Saviour in the hour of death ; the outbreak of public execration was still ringing in His ears: "Not this Man, but Barabbas." "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him !" (John xviii. 40, xix. 15).

* Thuc. ii. 43. Translation by Rev. H. Dale.

Must not the thought have come across the mind of Mary, as she stood watching and heart-stricken at the foot of the cross, "Is there no one who will give some help? He, my Son, went about doing good to all His countrymen; will none among them try and do Him some good? He felt for them in their troubles; will none feel for Him in His?" Perhaps her memory may have travelled back to that time when He, at the age of twelve, was found "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke ii. 46), when, by "His understanding and answers," He astonished all that were present. "Was His understanding less now than it was then? Has He not showed Himself openly among all the people, not only as the mighty Healer, but as the mighty Teacher, whose powers reach not only to restore the body, but to cleanse and heal the soul? whose words, mighty to save, have pierced the very depths of man's heart, have laid bare the most secret springs of action, have taught man more about himself than ever he knew before? Is there then among the learned, among the intellectual, among the more religious of His countrymen, is there none who can show sympathy (at least) with One whose powers have been felt, have been acknowledged as far beyond those of scribe or Pharisee? They who heard with wonder the brilliant promise of His boyhood, can they not appreciate the full development of His manhood?" Alas! the learned, the intellectual, the so-called religious, are the most bitter among all the enemies of thy Son. These are they who planned His apprehension, who subjected Him to the indignity of a mock trial, who stirred up the multitude to demand His Blood, and who turned the balance the wrong way in the mind of wavering Pilate, by their cry, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend;" "We have no king but Cæsar" (John xix. 12, 15).

With such conflict of agonizing feelings we may well

suppose the heart of the virgin mother to be torn. And besides all this, one more tender, yet more affectionate pang than all. She is parting with her Son. The pain of parting; who has not felt that? When each carriage door is shut, when the bell rings, when the guard's whistle and the engine's shriek is heard, when the wheels begin to turn and the train glides on, carrying away the friend to whom you have said, Good-bye, and you return to your own little world—perhaps on the way back the thought may arise, “We have parted! We hope to meet again; but it may be we shall never meet again.”

There is a journey which we all shall have to take, from which there is no return—a journey not heralded by the noise and bustle of man's machinery, but of which the signal is given by the silent but sure hand of death. Then, indeed, comes the pain of parting. The friend who is on the point of taking that journey will not come back to us; we shall see his face no more. That is the journey which, according to the apprehension of the mother, her Son is now taking, for as yet she knows not the power of His resurrection; for her, as for others, it is as yet a secret that very early in the morning of the very next first day in the week that Body, the hands and feet of which she now sees pierced upon the cross, shall be raised again, with the marks indeed of that crucifixion visibly, indelibly impressed, but with a life beyond the power of Caiaphas and Pilate, a life with the majesty of heaven poured mysteriously around it. But to her, as she stands there at the foot of the cross, the resurrection of His Body is not an accomplished fact. She hopes to meet Him in a better world, she does not know that He will be seen again in this world, and so she subdues her soul to parting with a Son who had, in His lifelong example, given the very pattern of obedience to that law of God which says, “Honour thy father and thy mother.”

The sorrows of Mary are the sorrows of Jesus. By sympathy He makes them His own. That look which He casts down upon her with His dying eyes tells us that He feels for His mother. And if it be one of the sharpest pains that rend our human nature to know and feel that another is suffering acute distress of mind and utter laceration of heart on our account, then the sufferings of Mary under the cross are among the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross.

But the pain of sympathy with another has a blessedness of its own; it tends at once to work its own cure. The mere fact that another feels for us lightens our sense of pain, and the consciousness that our sympathetic feeling for another has brought that other relief gives a delight which, if it refuse to bear the chains of a logical definition, is yet well understood by all who have ever felt it. Thus doth a soft light from heaven mark off this particular cloud from the others that gather round the cross. The pain of parting, that is the cloud; the power of sympathy, that is the light. "Retire from the cross, O virgin mother of thy Lord! Thy Son spares thy mother's eyes the sight of His actual death; thou has shown thy readiness to be faithful unto death, but His death thou needest not to behold. Thou hast seen enough; let distance veil the rest. Go with the Apostle of love, with him who has been the special object of thy Son's love, to thy future earthly home. Be thou on earth a mother to him, he will be on earth a son to thee. Hereafter thou and he shall meet Me again, and shall dwell for ever and for ever with Me in that world where the pain of parting is unknown." * "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man

* "Magna fides Mariae, cruci Filii adstare; magnum obsequium, ante mortem Ejus abire."—BENGEL.

would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned" (Cant. viii. 6, 7). Ye who have ever had to mourn, ye who may ever have to mourn, come, stand awhile with Mary under the cross. When has filial, when has maternal love had such a trial? When has filial, when has maternal love received a higher consecration?

"Even the Church, with her life divine,
Shows none more fair on the saintly throne;
Even Art, with her heaven-born fire,
Can frame and fashion nothing higher,
Than the Mother with her SON." *

* Adapted from Schiller. Who that has seen can forget La Madonna di San Sisto?

SERMON VI.

Sabachthani.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—PSALM XXII. 1.

THE title of this Psalm assigns the composition of it to David, but we are not told what particular occasion in his life of mixed fortune and varied spiritual experience called it forth, and any inquiry into such occasion would probably end in uncertainty at last. It is enough that, with the fine instinct of the true poet, the composer has here seized upon one of the conditions of our human nature, and that he has portrayed that condition in language with the vividness of which all who read it must be struck, even if they do not on the first reading penetrate into all its profound meaning.

The inspired poet is not here describing the wretched condition of the finally impenitent, whom God forsakes because they have forsaken God, who have loved their sins too well to give them up, whom therefore their sins will not give up, even when from dire experience of the bitter fruits those sins have lost the gaudy colouring which first made them attractive.

But what the Psalmist here describes is one of the conditions, or, if you please, one of the trials of our spiritual life, and as such we will consider it. Some may have been tried in this way, others may not have been so tried, but all may be. The trial is this—to lose for a while the consciousness of God's presence and support.

So long as we retain the sense that our endeavours to draw near to God are answered by His drawing near to us, so long as we can rise from our devotions and feel, "Now I am stronger than when I knelt down ; now I am ready for my day's work ; now I am armed against temptation ; now God's Spirit has spoken in my heart of hearts and lifted me up above the desire for base things to a longing after those things that are true and holy, lovely, and of good report ; now I can endure the trouble, the distress, the perplexity which God may be pleased to send upon me or mine ;" so long we bear up, if not cheerfully yet patiently ; so long we do not suffer the trials from without to make us give way and flinch in the performance of our duty. This feeling the Psalmist describes in the Psalm which follows next in order, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 4). It is that lively sense of God's support to which S. Paul gives vent in his triumphant jubilant way, "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" (Rom. viii. 31).

But there are seasons in our spiritual life when this is not so ; there are times of depression as well as of elevation. There are times when our devotions seem not to refresh us as they did before, when our prayers do not appear to bring down the answer which once they did, when faintness takes the place of strength within the soul, and we no longer enjoy the feeling of assurance that God is with us. Such a condition of our spiritual life fell equally within the range of David's experience as that more delightful one which he has described in the twenty-third Psalm. Thus he says, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. . . . Lord, why castest Thou off my soul ? why hidest Thou Thy face from me ?" "Mine iniquities

have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me;” “O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent” (Ps. lxxxviii. 6, 7, 14, xl. 12, xxii. 2).

Turn to the Book of Job, and see how touchingly the afflicted patriarch portrays this phase of the spiritual life. “Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?” “For Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth;” “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me!” (Job x. 10, xiii. 26, xxix. 2-5).

These passages show that from the earliest times, when we have any record of religious life at all, this has been a trial to which religious men have been subjected, and the trial is the more acute the more religious they are. The more the soul has known the blessedness of walking with God, the more severe will be its pain when God seems no longer to walk with it.*

Jesus, by His using the opening words of the twenty-second Psalm on the cross, has taught us that He, in taking our human nature, did not exempt Himself from this part in the law of human suffering. From Him was the consciousness of God’s presence and support for a time withdrawn. He knew what it was to feel Himself forsaken of God, and His appropriation of David’s words shows that David spoke not

* “Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?”—COWPER.

for himself only, but for all mankind ; he spoke for Him who is the Head of the new creation ; he spoke of "the last Adam," "the second Man, the Lord from heaven ;" he spoke of Christ.

What a marvellous depth do these Spirit-prompted words exhibit as spoken by Him ! If with all our meditation, with all our prayer over their full, vast meaning, we can get only a little way below the surface, still let us endeavour to do this much ; God will teach us more in time. Strive to apprehend any portion of this truth now ; hereafter you will find it open out more and more upon you. Some sudden dispensation, some thought flashing across your mind, coming you know not whence (but God knows), will set the truth before you in a fresh light, and you will say, "That is indeed true which David spoke out of the depth of his affliction ; that is true which Jesus repeated from the cross."

Of the seven utterances made by Jesus on the cross, this seems to be the central one. It follows probably on His parting address to His mother. On His cross of pain He did not forget His earthly mother ; He commended her to the care and protection of one who He knew would love her well. He turns to His heavenly Father, and He finds Himself—forsaken. So at last His wearied Spirit prompts. He has lost for the time His consciousness that God is with Him. His humanity, bowed beneath its load of unutterable woes, loses or seems to lose that without which humanity cannot be upheld. His anguish of soul finds its vent in the loud, piercing cry, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" Other words of that same Psalm had been previously applied to Him in mockery by His enemies, with a depth of meaning of which they were not aware : "He trusted in God ; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him" (Matt. xxvii. 43). Now He Himself takes up that same Scripture, and, using in His own Person its opening words, shows us that what had

been quoted from it of Him in mockery was true in earnest. And now His blasphemers heard their own Scripture quoted against them. Must they not then have felt, with the murderers of old (murderers in will, though by God's providence they were restrained from being murderers in act), "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear" (Gen. xlii. 21)? And that mysterious darkness (not to be explained by ordinary causes), which was over all the land from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour, must surely have given them a hint of judgment to come.

But what must these three hours have been to Jesus suspended on the cross, and bearing the sin of the world! Body, soul, spirit, were becoming utterly exhausted by the protracted, crushing agony. These sacred sufferings reached their climax when, "about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" (Matt. xxvii. 46). He felt no longer conscious of the divine support. Who can presume to fathom the depth of unutterable woe which the loss of that consciousness must have been to Him? Up to this time His human nature had been upheld by the sense of the divine favour. All that He had hitherto said or done had been said or done with the abiding consciousness that God was with Him. To this abiding, sustaining conviction it was that Jesus gave utterance at the open grave of Lazarus. Previously, we are told, Jesus "groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled," and "wept." "Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave." But when He had arrived there, and the stone had been taken away at His command, then "Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 33-42). In the Garden of Get-

semane, His will, in anticipation of the coming conflict, had seemed for a moment to shrink from the labour which His love had imposed upon it. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Yet, conscious of His Father's presence, He adds, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him" (Matt. xxvi. 39; Luke xxii. 43). But on the cross there was not this. Jesus there was left to the feeling that He was forsaken of God. Of all the sorrows He had to encounter on the cross, this surely was the most acute of all. If we have ever felt what a pain it is to be estranged, even for a day, from those whom we love and who love us, what must it have been to Him to lose the sense of His Father's support? For our sakes He chose the trial of feeling for the time the Father's love estranged. And if the higher the nature the more perfect is the love, and therefore the greater pain at such a separation, then, indeed, no sorrow has ever been like unto His sorrow, the sorrow of Him who could feel and say that He was forsaken of God.

This trial was for our sakes. Though in Him it reached its most intense form, its highest point, yet the trial is one which belongs to human nature. That we, sinful creatures, should so suffer, is but in the natural course of things. In nothing, perhaps, is the love of Jesus more clearly shown than in this, that He, sinless Himself, chose to undergo such a punishment as properly belongs to sinful creatures alone.

But since His love has made this sacrifice, since He chose to drink the fullest cup of bitterest suffering, let us, with thankfulness, adore that love, and cherish that proof of it in our heart of hearts. When our turn comes, when we are told to step down into the cold waters of the silent stream, when fearfulness and trembling have come upon

us, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed us,—then let it be our comfort and support to know that all we have suffered or can suffer in that way, Jesus has already suffered for us. Are we cast down? forsaken? So was He. Do we feel for the time the absence of God's support? So did He. Partners with Him in a common suffering, we know that He is able to sympathize with us and with our infirmities.

But there is one most important fact which we must not overlook, to which this solemn utterance of Jesus on the cross bears witness. It is this: not all His pains of body, not all His tortures of soul, not all His anguish of spirit, not even the feeling that He was forsaken of God, could tempt Him to lose His trust in God. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15). What Job contemplated as a possibility was with Jesus a fact. God willed that Jesus should be slain, but Jesus did not cease to trust in God. The very utterance in which He asks, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" does, with its very first word, claim God as His own; does, by the repetition of that first word, denote the speaker's unshaken confidence in Him. Jesus says, "My God, My God." And in the season of our individual trial, we shall do well to bear this in mind. The strain comes then upon our simple faith, upon our power of laying hold upon God, and keeping our hold firm. Our reasoning powers may be utterly baffled, we may be quite unable to work out the why and the wherefore of all that has come upon us; our feelings may be stunned by the overwhelming force of misfortune, we may hardly be able to frame one petition of prayer, but the one mainstay and support to the soul in the time of intense trial is this—I believe in God.

Even so the drowning man clutches with convulsive hold the friendly rope which is to draw him to the shore. What-

ever happens, he will not let go of that. The tempest howls, the waves roar, it may be the monsters of the deep are watching round him for their prey, his eyes are dim, his ears are filled with water, his limbs are benumbed, his senses are confused, his memory is gone, all is din and tumult around him, his hands are chafed by holding the very thing that is to save him,—yet he holds on, for holding on he may be saved ; letting go, he must be lost. It is the triumph of faith, seizing the “threefold cord,” which “is not quickly broken,” to do its function when hope is all but dead ; when even charity, though it “never faileth,” has not, for the time, any scope of action, but faith, triumphant, lives through the storm, and brings the tempest-tossed soul safe to the haven where it would be.

Jesus felt Himself forsaken. Was He really so? He lost His consciousness of God’s support. Did God really cast off His own beloved Son? Jesus claimed Him as His God. Did God ignore the claim of the holy Sufferer? Is it too bold a word to say that, in the whole course of the ministry of Jesus upon earth, that moment was the most acceptable to the Father, when the triumph of love was consummated by that death which redeemed the millions of men whom He had made? This moment when the Redeemer feels Himself to be forsaken is the moment when His work of redemption is accepted. Then is sprinkled that Blood of the Covenant which reconciles God to man, is the starting-point of a new dispensation, and “speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. xii. 24).

God forsakes not them that are His, so long as they can say, “My God.” The hour of their weakness is the hour of His strength. The moment when they feel forsaken of God is the time when, for the sake of Jesus, their sufferings are accepted with Him.

On the darkest day, if you could pierce the curtain of

the clouds, which though beyond our reach are not beyond our measurement, you would find that on their other side the sun was shining as bright as ever ; and that the stars, which own the guiding hand of God, were weaving their mystic dance in regular harmonious order. The mountain traveller has ere now scaled some glittering peak, from whence, when he looked down upon the world below, all that he saw was a vapoury sea of cloud, from which here and there peeped out, like islands in the watery ocean, some lesser pinnacles of the glorious mountain range. They who dwelt in the valley saw not the sun, but he, above the valley and above the cloud, could rejoice in the sunshine that lighted up a thousand snowy peaks and shed glory over the deep dark blue of heaven's cloudless vault.

Whatever clouds may have gathered around us here below, beyond and above them the Sun of Righteousness is ever shining, and with Him all those

“ Stars that round the Sun of Righteousness
In glorious order roll.”

They are praying that God would hasten the time of His elect. Let us join our prayers with theirs, waiting and looking for that glorious manifestation when the crucified One shall say, “ O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee ” (Isa. xlv. 21, 22).

SERMON VII.

The Sin of the World.

"And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."—ISAIAH
LIII. 6.

THE tenth day of the seventh month (Tisri) was one of the most remarkable days in the Jewish calendar. On that day the whole congregation were to afflict their souls. Then, and then alone, the high priest entered into the holy of holies. Then was made the solemn yearly atonement for the sins of the priests and of the people. The ritual is minutely described in Lev. xvi., and to one part of it our attention shall be for a brief space directed. Two young goats were, on the great day of atonement, presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. On them the high priest cast lots. That on which the Lord's lot fell was killed as a sin offering for the people; that on which the other lot fell was called the scapegoat. The high priest was to bring the live goat. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Lev. xvi. 21, 22). Thus the goat upon which

the Lord's lot fell was slain and offered for a sin offering. "But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with Him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness" (ver. 10).*

The reason why two goats were employed in this solemn service has been given thus—that in atonement, as prefigured by the ritual of Moses, there is a double notion. One notion is that "without shedding of blood is no remission." The other notion is that sin is, by God's mercy, completely put away from those who duly use His means of pardoning grace. Now, the slain goat could very well represent the one notion, and the dismissed live goat could very well represent the other. But neither animal could by itself represent both notions. The slain goat remained, and but for the other there would have been nothing to impress upon the people that their sins were put away. The live goat departed, and but for the other there would have been nothing to impress upon the people that for remission of sin blood must be shed. The union of the two offerings represents, in a figure, the nature of atonement as we gather it from God's Word—namely, the necessity of sacrifice, and the efficacy of sacrifice to put away sin.

It remained for Him, who is the one true Sacrifice, of whom all other sacrifices were but imperfect semblances and shadowy representations, to unite in His own Person the two apparently contradictory conditions of life and death; by His own one act to accomplish, in all the depth and fulness of reality, that which had been year by year acted (if it may be said) as in a rehearsal. The sins which were typically laid upon the live goat, and for the typical

* About the exact meaning of the word rendered "scapegoat" there has been much discussion: it is thought to mean "completely dismissed," or "a complete sending away."

cleansing of which his companion goat was slain, were really laid on Jesus, and His Blood it was that made the true atonement. The scapegoat bore, in a figure, the sins of one year ; Jesus bears, really, the sins of all the centuries. The scapegoat represented the putting away of sin from the congregation of Israel ; Jesus does really take away the sin of the world. He summed up, in His one real Atonement, that of which, in the many figurative atonements, the various animal sacrifices were the appointed similitudes. In His one Person, and only in His one Person, life and death found their mysterious meeting-point. He "was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit ;" He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (1 Pet. iii. 18 ; Rom. iv. 25).

It seems natural to suppose that the words of the prophet find their significance in the ritual of the day of atonement. Moses enjoins that the high priest was to lay on the scapegoat the iniquities of all the people. Isaiah says, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Alas ! that they who had been trained up in the ritual of Moses, were familiar with all its details as well as with the writings of Isaiah, failed to recognize the Great Reality, and would "not obey the truth"—they "before whose eyes Jesus Christ" had "been evidently set forth, crucified among" them (Gal. iii. 1) !

But shall we refuse to recognize that Great Reality which is this day * set before the eye of faith ? We see not the cross erected ; we see not Jesus bleeding on the cross as they saw Him who more than eighteen hundred years ago nailed Him there. But have those eighteen centuries made His death of less moment to us ? Is it not a matter of vital interest to each one of us that the sins we have committed may, by the Blood of Jesus, be purged ? Why do so many Christians refuse to commemorate "once a year" that most

* Good Friday.

solemn day on which turn the everlasting destinies of the human race? Why do so many turn the day of humiliation into one of vain amusement, not to say worse?

For of this I feel convinced: the more we dwell upon the sorrows of the "Man of sorrows," the more we can impress upon our souls and upon our hearts what they really were, what He really went through,—the more shall we become convinced how hateful sin is to God, how degrading it is to man. Why did Jesus encounter all these sorrows? Because of our sins. Why did He die that death? Because "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The reasons why it should have pleased Almighty God to have taken precisely this way of saving mankind, namely, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "how, and in what particular way, it had this efficacy, there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain; but I cannot find that the Scripture has explained it." * The reasons lie in the depth of the eternal counsels, but the fact has been declared plain as "the tongues of men and of angels" could enunciate it. Accordingly "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24).

Now, when I strive to form some idea of the weight which the suffering Jesus is bearing on the cross, I confess that these words of the prophet seem to have a depth of meaning which our present powers are not adequate to exhaust. Thus much we can see that the mere presence of evil is pain to a perfectly pure being. Yet this is what Jesus has to encounter on the cross. Present to Him, present to His sinless spirit, is the whole wickedness of mankind from first to last. If it makes any one of us wretched (for the time) when we read of or witness some case of

* Bishop Butler, "Analogy," II. v., vi.

desperate villainy ; if we feel that our best feelings are outraged, our better nature violated, when some case of deep-laid fraud, of diabolical malice, of foul lust, or of all combined, is brought before our cognizance ;—what must have been the burden pressing down, with a dead weight, upon the soul of Him to whom was present, in some mysterious way which I do not venture to define, the concentrated virulence of the collected sins of all who shall hereafter stand before Him to receive their final sentence for better or for worse ?

The painful impression made on our own mind by our becoming acquainted with the sin of another, is a most important fact in the analysis of our moral nature. It is a witness in the heart of man for good, and against evil. Men will condemn, in the case of another, the very sin to which, in their own, they have become blind ; as David, stirred to indignation when Nathan told him, in a parable, of the wrong done by the rich to the poor man, exclaimed, “As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.” But what were David’s feelings when, under the prophet’s rebuke, “Thou art the man !” he awoke to the consciousness of his own twofold sin (2 Sam. xii. 5, 7) ? And what is the feeling of every sinner when he has become fully awakened to the nature of the sin which he has committed, when that sin appears before him in its true light, in all its natural hatefulness, in all its full-blown consequences ? Is there not a dreadful sense of oppression upon the spirit, of dead weight upon the soul, as if we had done something from which we never could recover, lost a character we never could regain, fallen from a state to which we could never hope to rise ? “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up” (Ps. xl. 12). These words contain the experience of one who knew, by terrible reality, something about the depths of sin. There is the feeling of awful fear, which “Adam and his wife” had

"when they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. iii. 8). There is a consciousness that we have merited punishment from a loving Father—a punishment made more severe from the very fact that it comes from One who loves us. There is the bitter feeling of estrangement, of being liable to more than we are able to bear. There is the awful vision of an offended God.

What, then, must be the load weighing down the spirit of Him who is bearing the punishment due for "the sin of the world"! Sinless Himself, to Him has been transferred the sin of others. He bears the dreadful aggregate of all their punishments. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). On Him are visited the effects of God's anger. What must be to Him the consciousness of His Father's wrath, exacting its just penalty in the pains which He is enduring!

Beyond this, let us not presume to speculate. The intensity of the Redeemer's sufferings can be known to Himself alone. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me" (Isa. lxiii. 3). If it be true of each one of us that "the heart knoweth his own bitterness;" if there are sorrows which a constraining instinct forbids us to confide even to those who are most closely united with ourselves;—let us not presume rudely to break into the secret chambers of the Saviour's heart, and, drawing upon our own unchastened imagination, suppose that we can conceive of what is passing there.

Rather, turning back upon ourselves, let us ask each himself, "How should all this affect me?"

What would be our feeling if we had to witness some special object of our love undergoing some dreadful penalty for our sakes? Suppose, moreover, that the sufferer was suffering for the wrong that we had done, being himself

perfectly innocent. What could our feeling be but that of bitter anguish over our own transgression, and of intensified love for him who was suffering in our behalf? And if such a supposition makes us shrink within ourselves at the bare thought, why is it that we are so little affected by the memory of the Crucifixion? Is it not because we have so little realized our own sins or the love of Jesus?

Let, then, that event which the Church commemorates to-day teach us to sit in judgment upon ourselves, to call to mind the sins we have committed, the sins we are most likely to commit. Then let us contemplate the Saviour on His cross, bearing, as part of His burden, our own particular sins "laid on Him," too heavy for the sinner to bear, but (God be thanked) not too heavy for Him to bear, and, by bearing, to take away.

Then let the act of self-judgment be followed up by an earnest prayer. "O crucified Saviour, help me to crucify this sin of mine which crucified Thee, that I may become dead to it, and it to me! Give me the counteracting power of that particular grace which I most need, and which will enable me to live unto Thee!" So may each conclude the solemn service of this the great Christian day of atonement, justified by the Blood which was poured out as on this day, justified by the Righteousness of Him on whom was laid "the iniquity of us all."

THE END.





